
CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

A nonpartisan policy board established in 1974 by the Governor and Legislature

COLLABORATIVE STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Brief 97-4

Background

In the last two decades, public schools, higher educational institutions, the private sector, and community-based organizations have collaborated to develop programs to increase the eligibility rates for university attendance and the college participation rates of students from groups with consistently low rates in the past. These programs address significant educational challenges facing California today:

- ♦ Improving student learning and academic performance among California elementary and secondary school students; and,
- ♦ Reducing the need for remedial instruction at the California State University and the University of California.

Who are the students participating in these programs?

These programs served 136,265 students from all geographic regions of California, all racial-ethnic groups, and all socio-economic levels in 1994. Because students from certain backgrounds -- sometimes characterized by geographic regions, racial-ethnic identification, or family income or educational levels -- have had consistently low eligibility and college participation rates, these programs focus on providing services and support to schools and students in those communities.

How do these programs operate and what services do they offer?

These programs are collaborative efforts between public schools, their local colleges and universities -- both public and independent -- private sector companies, and community-based organizations. The participating entities jointly decide, plan, and conduct activities they determine students need in a particular area. In addition, all participating institutions contribute resources to finance the cooperative effort.

While the design of each program varies on the basis of local needs, the major components are:

- ♦ Academic tutoring and skill enrichment;
- ♦ Advisement, primarily by trained college students;
- ♦ Presentations from representatives of various professions;
- ♦ College admissions test preparation workshops; and,
- ♦ Assistance with college admissions and financial aid applications.

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What evidence exists to indicate that these programs are effective?

In December, 1996, the California Postsecondary Education Commission examined nine statewide programs and concluded: "The programs have clearly demonstrated their effectiveness in achieving their individual and collective goal of increasing the number of students from groups with low eligibility and college-going rates who are prepared for, and enroll in, college." Examining the behavior of the 1994 seniors participating in these programs provides evidence of program effectiveness:

- ♦ 64.5 percent of seniors participating in these programs enrolled in college the following fall as contrasted to 53.2 percent of all California high school graduates;
- ♦ 17 percent of program seniors entered the California State University as compared to 8.5 percent of seniors statewide and 14.3 percent of program seniors entered the University of California in contrast to 7.3 percent of all seniors statewide; and,
- ♦ Seniors participating in the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program excelled over their classmates statewide in terms of high school grade point average, grades of C or better in high school Physics classes, and scores on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT).

If these programs are effective, why are the college eligibility and participation rates in California not significantly improved, particularly for those groups of students who are the focus of these programs?

These programs served only a small share of schools and students in the state in 1994:

- ♦ 15 percent of the public schools in the state participated in these programs;
- ♦ 3.9 percent of California's public students were involved;
- ♦ 8.6 percent of the students from groups with low eligibility and college participation rates were served collectively by these programs.

With such small numbers of participants -- no matter the level of effectiveness -- it would be mathematically impossible for these programs to significantly affect the college participation rate in the state.

However, based upon the success of these programs in increasing the number of students eligible for admission to, and their subsequent enrollment in, college, the Commission recommended that state policy and resources be dedicated to expanding these programs so that, at a minimum, all students from groups with low eligibility rates may participate in order for them to prepare for college.

Are the programs cost-effective and what resources are needed to expand them?

The average cost per-student for these programs was \$140 per year from a combination of resources from the State, educational institutions, and the private sector. Of that amount, \$39, or 27 percent, were from State funds that totalled \$5 million in 1994. On that basis, it would cost \$61 million in State dollars to serve all students from groups with current low eligibility and college-going rates. These State funds could leverage \$161 million in other resources for these programs.

This issue brief is one of a series based on CPEC's long term planning document, *The Challenge of the Century*. Planning for record student enrollment and improving educational outcomes are primary statutory responsibilities of the Commission. In the *Challenge*, the Commission examines solutions and presents recommendations and strategies for providing postsecondary education and training opportunities most effectively and efficiently to increasing numbers of students. For more information on *The Challenge of the Century*, or this issue brief, contact Mary Saenz of the Commission's Governmental Relations Unit at 445-1910.